

*Office of the Mayor
Village of Sleepy Hollow
28 Beekman Avenue
Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591*

January 2022

Dear Friends,

These past two years has been about the pandemic and how we, as a community, have responded.

COVID so upended our daily lives that its seismic effects cannot be exaggerated. People from every neighborhood got sick; some died. Our local economy is damaged. The Phelps Hospital staff, nurses and doctors along with Sleepy Hollow's first responders showed incredible strength under unimaginable stress. Maybe soon, we can gather with friends and family without fear of transmitting the virus? A few commuters are just now returning to jobs in the city, and Metro-North estimates it is still three years before the full compliment of their passengers return. How TUFSD students, parents and teachers are getting through all this is a small miracle.

It's been hard; it's not over. As I write this, the number of positive cases in the Village has doubled in just the past two weeks. Most of us are still wearing masks when out in public in order to protect each other. If you haven't done so, I urge you to get the vaccine, if not for yourself, to protect others.

I take comfort in this fact: we came together and we did good things. As the need increased dramatically, food drives and monetary donations to the Community Pantry tripled the amounts of perishable and non-perishable groceries that were made available to families who would go hungry otherwise. Village staff on their own volition brought groceries to homes when a family was too sick to go to the food pantry. Northwell Health provided mobile clinics for COVID testing and Westchester County is now providing local clinics for pediatric vaccines. We gave it our all on Census 2020. Since last autumn, The Katherine Davis Bathhouse in Kingsland Park has been the site of open-air, after-school workshops in Latin American music and dance. It's also become the home for the local Summer Arts Camp, previously held at the middle school. The Police Reform Committee held its first round of meetings and they will continue with a different structure that better reflects the Village (i.e. not the NYS checklist). The process for creating the Wishing Wall along the Hudson, hosting a two-day charrette with Architecture for Kids, fireworks for Chick Gallela's 100th birthday, the Gold Star Mothers memorial inaugurated at Horan's Landing, planting dozens of native trees and pollinator gardens throughout our downtown to address environmental justice, and getting our picnic tables to our restaurants to give them the chance to quickly create outdoor seating — these are tangibles that reflect our village values. (The Wishing Wall received the 2021 ArtsWestchester Community Art award. That project really did take a village.)

Meanwhile, sidewalks are being repaired and replaced and water and sewer lines continue to be upgraded. Decorative and inviting lights now adorn the new Beekman/Cortland parklet and Valley Street. The parklet will be made permanent and incorporated into a new streetscape for Cortland in 2022. Traffic patterns on the streets in downtown will be studied to improve pedestrian safety. Negotiations continue with the NYS Department of Transportation to make Route 9 safer.

Now, a warm welcome to the first families at the Edge-on-Hudson project! The pandemic caused a supply-chain mess that has been frustrating, but many residences are in the process of receiving their certificate of occupancy. DeCicco & Sons is finishing its work with the Planning Board and their site will soon be under construction. The Planning Board is also assessing proposed changes to the next round of housing construction. (No, we are not allowing additional units beyond what has been agreed to in the Special Permit. Viral misinformation that in turn leads to inaccurate assumptions that are then put up on social media continues to be a vexing problem.)

Designs for many of the new public spaces at Edge are approved and shovels are being put to use. The Riverwalk's Phase One (of three) should be completed in the Spring. It's good to see people walking along the Hudson River, enjoying connections to the Village, Tarrytown and Kingsland Park. The County will begin the \$3.5 million restoration of the Sleepy Hollow Lighthouse shortly.

Meanwhile, the Village is reclaiming the Pocantico River shoreline that runs through Devries Park, complementing Historic Hudson Valley's efforts on their section of the Pocantico River. The schematic drawings for Devries, the new Common and the recreational fields can be seen on the village website. These spaces will be jewels in their own right. Together, with Kingsland and the new Riverwalk, we will create a spectacular green necklace.

Trees are a vital element of our infrastructure. We completed a village-wide inventory of trees found on public property this spring. It shows that over the past six years, the number of trees on public space has increased by 15%. We are crafting an update to the Village code that will encourage the stewardship of public and private trees, moving us to a proactive process from one that was reactive. I expect that long-range management plans for our trees and our parks will be drafted and presented to the Board of Trustees in the coming year. Sleepy Hollow now celebrates its 20th year as a designated National Tree City and we were recently named a NYS Bronze Star Climate Smart Community. (We are working to quickly achieve a Silver status.)

The new DPW facility should be up and running by early 2023. (The site has been raised some 16 feet with thousands of cubic yards of clean landfill; lines for water and sewer are in.) The drawings for the new buildings are not yet complete, but when we have them in hand they will be made available on the Village website. We engaged an outside firm to look at how DPW operates and to give us guidelines as we create a truly 21st century department. The ideas generated by that study, which was extremely thorough and well written, will also go a long ways to informing the final building and site design. (Just ahead of the study, we created a Recreation and Parks Department to be managed by Matt Arone. Maintenance of the parks will be under his purview for the foreseeable future.) Richie Gross retired this year from DPW after serving the Village admirably for 40 years. Thank you, Richie. You always put the Village first.

The Board is taking a hard look at the Village's real estate assets to be sure that they align with future needs. (And how about those homeowner property tax increases that have been kept to less than 2% annually on average over the past decade?)


For all this, Anthony Giaccio, Village Administrator, our entire Village staff, Chief Bueti and the SHPD, our volunteers and Trustees deserve a profound thank you. You all did extraordinary work in an extraordinary time.

We lost Chick Gallela on September 29th. What he did for the Village is incalculable. He always reminded us that life is precious and that we should dance at every opportunity. He was dancing up a storm on Beekman Avenue just five days before he died. It is one way that I will remember him. I also remember how often Chick would admonish us to give back to the community....this community.

I finish this letter with a salute to Glenn Rosenbloom, who served as the Deputy Mayor for seven years and to John Leavy, who served two terms as Trustee. While they have stepped away from the daily work of being a Trustee, their counsel will always be welcome. The Village is truly a better place because of their service and in ways that we can't always see.

Together let's continue our collective efforts to make Sleepy Hollow a special place.

Be safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Wray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ken Wray
Mayor